

TALK IT OVER

CROSS TO CROWN

PART 2 | 30 MARCH 2025

NOTES TO LEADERS

1. Reminder of our LifeGroup Leaders training event at 7pm tomorrow night. Tanya McKinley will be unpacking the prophetic.
2. We have a water baptism service coming up at the 9:30am service on Good Friday (18 April)

SCRIPTURES

MATTHEW 27:11-18; 21-23

Meanwhile Jesus stood before the governor, and the governor asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?" "You have said so," Jesus replied. When he was accused by the chief priests and the elders, he gave no answer. Then Pilate asked him, "Don't you hear the testimony they are bringing against you?" But Jesus made no reply, not even to a single charge—to the great amazement of the governor. Now it was the governor's custom at the festival to release a prisoner chosen by the crowd. At that time they had a well-known prisoner whose name was Jesus Barabbas. So when the crowd had gathered, Pilate asked them, "Which one do you want me to release to you: Jesus Barabbas, or Jesus who is called the Messiah?" For he knew it was out of self-interest that they had handed Jesus over to him...

"Which of the two do you want me to release to you?" asked the governor. "Barabbas," they answered. "What shall I do, then, with Jesus who is called the Messiah?" Pilate asked. They all answered, "Crucify him!" "Why? What crime has he committed?" asked Pilate. But they shouted all the louder, "Crucify him!"

START TALKING

1. What stood out to you from Sunday's message? What challenged you or encouraged you?
2. What has God been doing in your world - what can we celebrate?

START THINKING

1. In John 10:27 Jesus says: "My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me." What does it mean to recognise God's voice, and how can we grow in recognizing it more clearly?
2. Jesus understood His purpose, even in suffering. How does knowing our God-given purpose anchor our thoughts during difficult times?
3. What does it look like to "crucify our sin" rather than our soul? Are there any habits, mindsets, or attitudes that God is calling you to surrender?

START SHARING

1. Jesus stood before Pilate knowing that God's plan was greater than what people could see. Have you ever been in a situation where you couldn't see what God was doing, but later realized He was working for your good?
2. Pilate was pressured by the crowd's opinion. Can you think of a time when you felt pressured to compromise your faith or values? How did you respond? How might you handle it differently by prioritizing God's voice?
3. Pilate asked the crowd, "What shall I do, then, with Jesus?" (Matthew 27:22). How would you answer that question today?

START PRAYING

1. Pray that we would hear God's voice clearly
2. That we would learn to trust in His plan in uncertain times
3. And that we would follow Jesus boldly!

START DOING

1. Are there areas of your life where you've been listening to the crowd instead of the cross? What is one step you can take this week to realign with God's voice?
2. What is one specific action you can take this week to follow Jesus more boldly in your workplace, family, or community?

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SUMMARY OF SUNDAY'S MESSAGE

This Sunday, Phil shared a challenging message in part 2 of our series, Cross to Crown.

After Jesus was arrested, He went through three Jewish trials before facing the Roman authorities:

1. Before Annas, the former High Priest
2. Before Caiaphas, the current high priest, and the Sanhedrin (Jewish council)
3. The full Sanhedrin convened again at dawn

According to Jewish law, trials required at least two witnesses and had to be held during the day. However, Jesus' trial was at night, and the witnesses' testimonies did not align, making the trial unjust. Caiaphas pressured Jesus into "incriminating" Himself by asking Him directly if he was the Son of God. When Jesus affirmed this, the leaders accused Him of blasphemy and sentenced Him to death. The next morning, the Sanhedrin reconvened to formally confirm the verdict. However, the Jews lacked the authority to execute capital punishment, so they sent Jesus to the Roman governor, Pilate, presenting false charges against him.

Matthew 27:11-18; 21-23 recounts the moment Jesus stood before Pilate: *Meanwhile Jesus stood before the governor, and the governor asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?" "You have said so," Jesus replied. When he was accused by the chief priests and the elders, he gave no answer. Then Pilate asked him, "Don't you hear the testimony they are bringing against you?" But Jesus made no reply, not even to a single charge—to the great amazement of the governor. Now it was the governor's custom at the festival to release a prisoner chosen by the crowd. At that time they had a well-known prisoner whose name was Jesus Barabbas. So when the crowd had gathered, Pilate asked them, "Which one do you want me to release to you: Jesus Barabbas, or Jesus who is called the Messiah?" For he knew it was out of self-interest that they had handed Jesus over to him...*

"Which of the two do you want me to release to you?" asked the governor. "Barabbas," they answered. "What shall I do, then, with Jesus who is called the Messiah?" Pilate asked. They all answered, "Crucify him!" "Why? What crime has he committed?" asked Pilate. But they shouted all the louder, "Crucify him!"

The first thing that really stands out is Jesus' silence: *"But Jesus made no reply, not even to a single charge—to the great amazement of the governor."* Matthew 27:14

He stood before Pilate, the most powerful Roman authority in the region, who had the power to condemn or free Him. The charges against Him were so trumped up, and there was nothing that was actually going to send Him to the cross according to Roman law; He just needed to respond. Yet, Jesus did not defend Himself.

But Jesus wasn't just being silent. He wasn't just ignoring a voice. Jesus was listening to two voices that day, and He chose to listen to the second one, the voice of His Father. You see, Jesus wasn't just ignoring the voices; He was leaning in. Jesus was choosing to listen to a voice that He'd grown up with His whole life, a voice which He'd come to trust and to know that no matter what his father said, that's the voice that I trust.

1: God is speaking. Can you hear Him?

We live in a noisy world filled with opinions, distractions, and competing voices. Social media, books, family, and society all offer their perspectives. Even our inner voice can be loud and filled with doubts, fears, and insecurities. But in the midst of all of this, God is always speaking. The question is whether we are listening?

"Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart... but the Lord was not in the wind... After the fire came a gentle whisper." 1 Kings 19:11-12

We're all facing challenges, difficulties and unknowns in some areas of our lives. We can't see the future, but the "voices of the crowd" are always shouting. The voices around us may tell us we are not good enough, that we should live in fear, or that we should pursue fleeting happiness. But God's voice brings peace, purpose, and clarity.

Jesus chose to listen to the voice of The Father, in spite of what He was going through, and we have the same voice we can listen to. My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. John 10:27.

You can only follow a voice you recognise: Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, 'This is the way; walk in it.' Isaiah 30:21

Who is piloting your life? Are you listening to the voices of the crowd, or are you tuning in to the one voice that truly matters—the voice of God?

The Crowd's voice

FEAR AND HURT
GUILT AND SHAME
DOUBT & INSECURITY
FALSE HAPPINESS

Jesus's voice

PEACE
A STILL MIND
A CLEAR PATH
TRUE JOY

2: God's voice anchors my thoughts and actions

Sometimes, what we see is different from what God is doing. Jesus understood His purpose and trusted God's plan. He knew the answer to the most important question. Why am I here?

In John 18:37, Jesus tells Pilate, "...*For this reason I was born and for this I came into the world: to testify to the truth.*" John 18:37. His silence before Pilate was not weakness but obedience. The cross was not a tragedy; it was a triumph in disguise.

(a) God anchors my thoughts

We can only see the current part of the obstacle course (the bit that we're struggling with), but we need to know that there is a bigger story at play. We need to know our purpose and trust God's plan. "*For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.*" 2 Corinthians 4:17-18. Our struggles are not the end of the story. They're part of it. The King of the universe has a purpose for us, and His plan secures us.

What does it mean to have anchored thoughts? It makes you calm when the crowd gets noisy. You know that God is working his plan in your life, regardless of other people's plans for your life. "*And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.*" Romans 8:28

The greatest example we have of this was when Jesus stood before Pilate because Pilate was actually standing before Jesus. Annas was standing before Jesus. Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin were standing before Jesus. We stand before Jesus - not the other way around. That's the real narrative. That's really what's going on. Jesus knew he was going to the cross, and He knew this was what God had as a plan for his life.

(b) God anchors my actions

As we go through this obstacle course of life and learn to listen to the voice of God, we start to consider that He can see what we're thinking and doing. We begin to desire to honour Him in our thoughts and actions. There is no other logical, sensible response to Christ's grace in our lives than for us to want to bear fruit from our relationship with Him. *For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear.*" Revelation 19:7-8

3: What will you do with Jesus?

Pilate presented Jesus to the crowd, and he asked the biggest question of his life: "*What shall I do, then, with Jesus who is called the Messiah?*" Matthew 27:22

Who's the crowd? It's us. We're the crowd, except Jesus isn't asking us as a 'crowd'. He's asking us individually what we will do with Him standing before us today.

Will we crucify our sin or crucify our soul? You see, to save our souls, we need to crucify our sin.

"Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts." Hebrews 3:15

The True Case of George Wilson:

In 1830, a man named George Wilson was convicted of a capital crime (he robbed the U.S. Mail) and sentenced to death. However, President Andrew Jackson issued Wilson a full pardon, an official act of mercy that should have saved his life. To everyone's astonishment, Wilson refused the pardon. He would not accept this undeserved freedom. The case went all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court, which had to decide what to do with a pardon that the prisoner rejected. The Court's decision was clear: a pardon is only effective if the person accepts it. Chief Justice John Marshall wrote, "... **if it is rejected, we have discovered no power in this court to force it upon him.**" In the end, because George Wilson refused the offer of mercy, the pardon had no effect – and he was hanged for his crimes.

So, in conclusion, will you follow the crowd, or follow the cross?